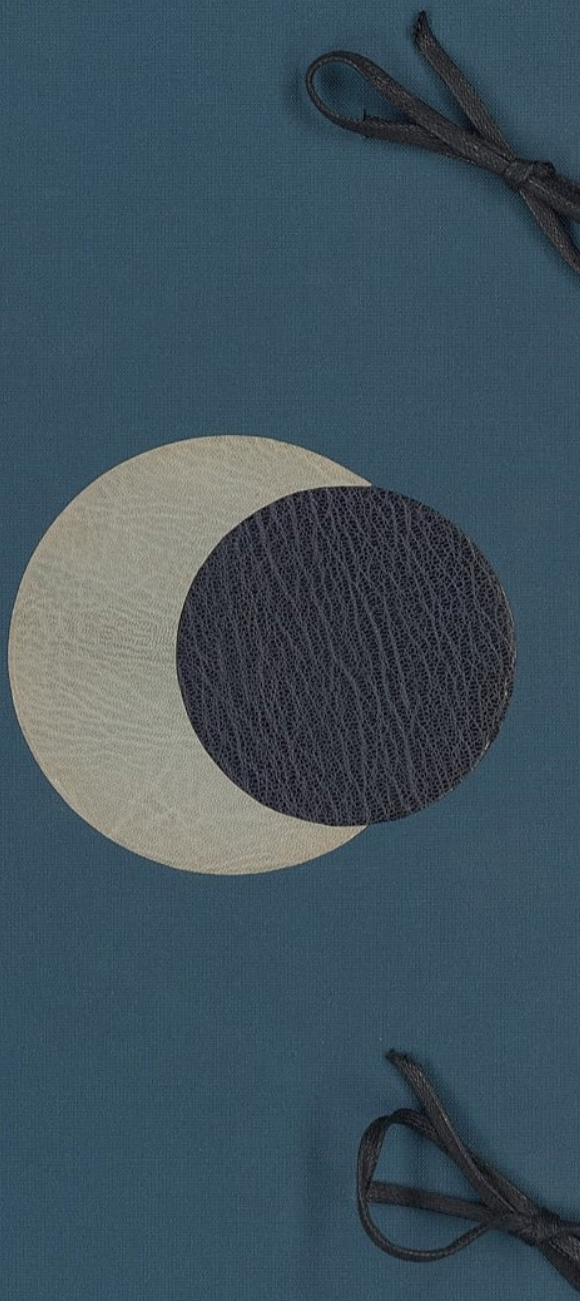


Two Moons *is the image of the young schizophrenic who figures in the final poem of this book. In a sense, all eight poems are about people who live by the light of two moons. The nine mezzotints were inspired by primitive art, or by Nature at its most enigmatic.* The Tempest, *most mystical of all Shakespeare's plays, provided the link passages.*
*This edition of her mezzotints & poems, set & printed by* Shirley Jones, *in 18-point Gill Sans type on Rives mould-made paper, is limited to 40 copies. Size 15 by 14 inches. Presented in a wrap-around box of dark blue cloth, with leather onlays & title by Jan Ascoli.* *Price:* £550
*Case-bound with matching slip-case* *Price:* £570

# Two Moons

Ariel. — *if you now beheld them, your affections*
*Would become tender.*
Prospero. *Dost thou think so, spirit?*
Ariel. *Mine would, sir, were I human.*

*The Tempest*

*What seest thou else*
*In the dark backward and abysm of time?*

Act I

We had her briefly in our care.

That street child with her cropped fair hair
Was eighteen on the day she came to us.
Scars, mental and emotional, ill-health,
Drug-abuse had stooped her.
Mostly she avoided eye-contact,
Puffed interminably at cigarettes,
Related best to dogs.
She talked with love and with authority
Of her own dog, left behind.
Guilt racked her when she remembered,
But he wasn't suffering.
Well-fed, in surroundings familiar to him now
He wandered, street-wise as she'd raised him.
As she was.

Except that the streets and her street family
Harboured rape and death
As well as shelter from the nightmare
— Real and imaginary —
Of her father.

*Swear by this bottle how thou cam'st hither.*

Act II

She wasn't old. Thirty something isn't old
To be a wino
And that's what she was.
Her dog knew.
Patient, embarassed, he sat on the train seat
With his head on the seat's back,
Facing the open carriage —
And observed her captive audience.

We listened as she gave us the story of her life.
You knew her dog had heard it all before
And watched only out of interest
At our reaction.

At the end of her recital
He didn't stir as we shuffled uncomfortably.
Two girls giggled and he eyed them
Reproachfully.

'You'll have to forgive me'
— We hadn't assumed otherwise —
'I always give all my business away
When I drink too much.' And she took another drink
From a bottle in a plastic bag.
'He knows,' she said, nodding at her dog,
'He's heard it all before.' He turned his head
And eyed her thoughtfully. He knew all right.
This was just her matinee performance.
He looked as though he wondered
How she would be — and where — at midnight.

*The sun will set, before I shall discharge*
*What I must strive to do.*

Act III

Young, black, in blue bobble hat,
Anorak zipped to throat in mid-summer heat,
Shoulders hunched, head thrust forward,
He waited intently.
As a non-stopping train fooled waiting passengers
Rising to their feet, he remained confidently seated
Long before it didn't stop.

A 98 he was watching for, he said,
But he reeled off number, destination and every station
It would stop at, of every train that passed us by.
Single-minded and knowledgeable in his world,
Oblivious of glances of startled passers-by
He responded with a nod to my superfluous question,
'Are you a train-spotter?'

He evinced the eager anticipation
Of a youth on his first date,
But the girl of his dreams was train 98.

*— and then, in dreaming,*
*The clouds methought would open and show riches*
*Ready to drop upon me; that when I wak'd*
*I cried to dream again.*

Act III

Sammy talks to trees, walls, cars and to himself.
He talks to people too. But oh, the change.

When he discourses with inanimate things
Sammy becomes an actor of the old school
Enriching what he silently says
With mime. A Prospero plucking at magic garments
He grandly gesticulates, invoking gods, the wind
And passing clouds, globally inclusive
In his private charades.

In conversations with himself, he roars out loud
And punctuates his speech with thunderous exclamations
Alarming strangers passing by, who cross the road
To avoid a Sammy oblivious even of their presence.

But when you meet him in the street,
Recall him to the here and now, Prospero's
Banished.
Sammy ducks his head obsequiously,
Touches his forelock and bares brown teeth
In a fawning old dog's grin, the eloquence
Of cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces reduced to
'Have you got a cigarette, please?'

*— the great globe itself,*
*Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve*
*And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,*
*Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff*
*As dreams are made on, and our little life*
*Is rounded with a sleep.*

Act IV

The bus on Madison was full.
In Central Park an Indian Summer sun
Had dazzled.
But here, winter cast its shadow
On urban canyons and the buildings streamed
As though it rained.

'Wait a minute, will ya!
I'm not as young as I look ya know!'
The driver, impervious as Buddha,
Stared straight ahead.

Shedding fat and perspiration on seated passengers
She fastened her gaze on a peaked cap near her.
'How old d'ya say I was?'
The peaked cap looked up.
'I'm sixty four, ya know!'
Gamely he rose to the occasion, but kept his seat,
'Never! Fifty four!'

And they began a kind of auctioneer's game
Where he would add and she would drop
A year or two.
'Fifty nine? OK, I'll settle for that.
My boss wouldn't. Jeez, that guy!'
And she spat five years away with a single gesture.

'OK, let me off will ya!'
And she lurched for the tape to stop the bus.

She floundered off, and a shaft of light from 82nd Street
Fell briefly on the driver's seat —
An ebony obelisk
Not of our time or place.

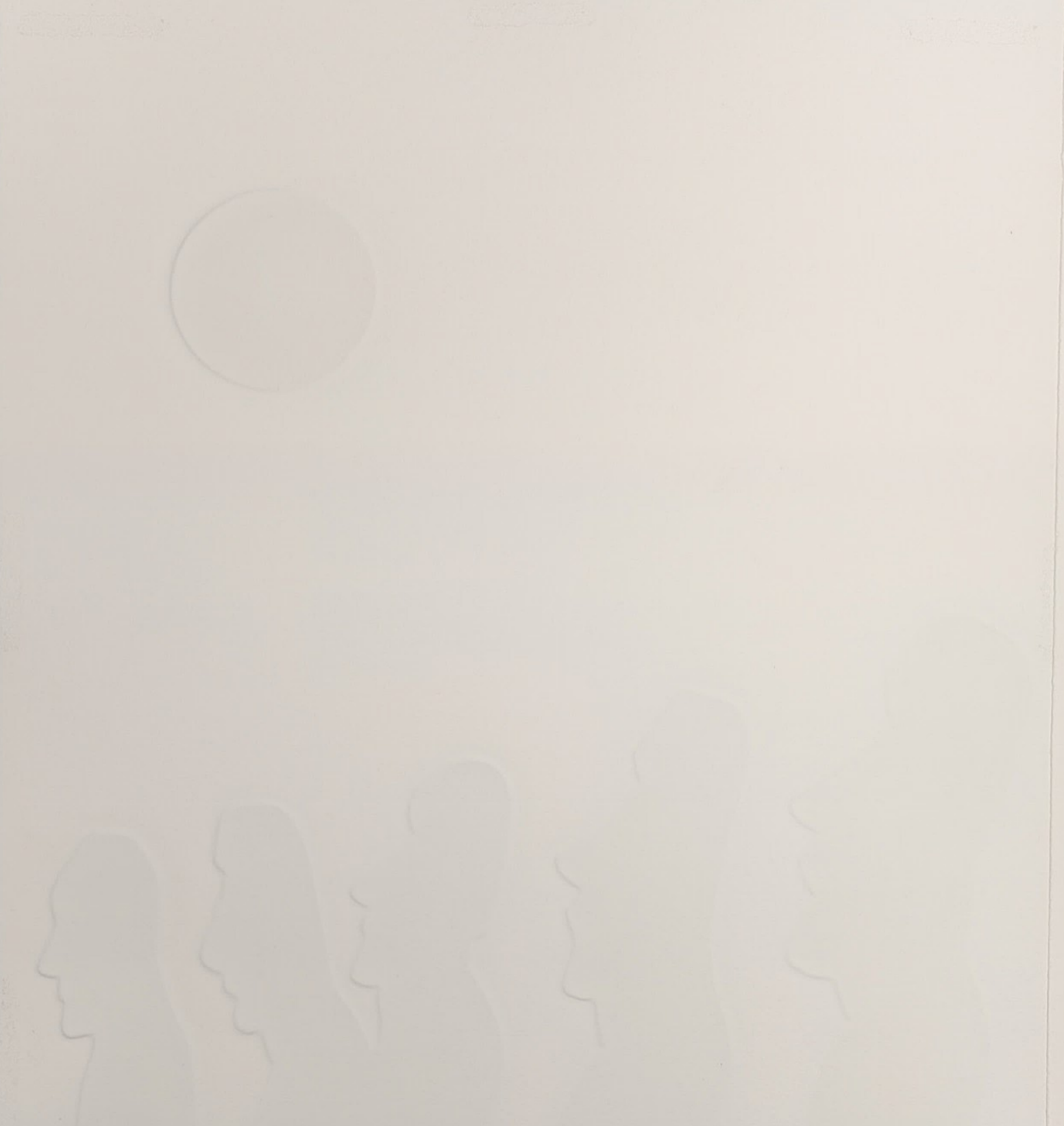
*Shortly shall all my labours end.*

Act IV

The old ones sit with the old ones, indifferent
To each other. Silent lips talking of
Times gone by to people who died
Long before.

White haired women watching, waiting,
Note each other's passing. A stopped watch
A clock out of sight irrationally
Disturbing.

They are governed by no moon now. Their sun's
Setting is mortally near — a rounding
Off they wish for but fear. Not death, you see,
Just the dying.



*As you from crimes would pardon'd be,*
*Let your indulgence set me free.*

Act V

Hetty wants to go home now, and says so endlessly —
But not to lovely Brecon where she's lived for sixty years
Nor to childhood Skewen with its oil refinery.
Further off than these the song of *hiraeth* Hetty hears.

As a child she sang of that happy land far far away
Where her folk — Exclusive Brethren — knew with certainty
They would stand with saints immortal on the promised day
— Their faith less strong on Charity than a kill-joy bigotry.

Hetty's very old now and she wanders constantly
In realms of otherworldliness, plagued by an obsession:
She has to meet her father, who's coming presently,
And what causes her distress is she's lost her bus fare home.

'We will gather at the river,' Hetty sang when she was young
And she's ready, but she needs a coin to pay the ferryman.
It isn't grim-faced Charon, but her father who is waiting —
Has she defaulted on her payments to the flinty Brethren?

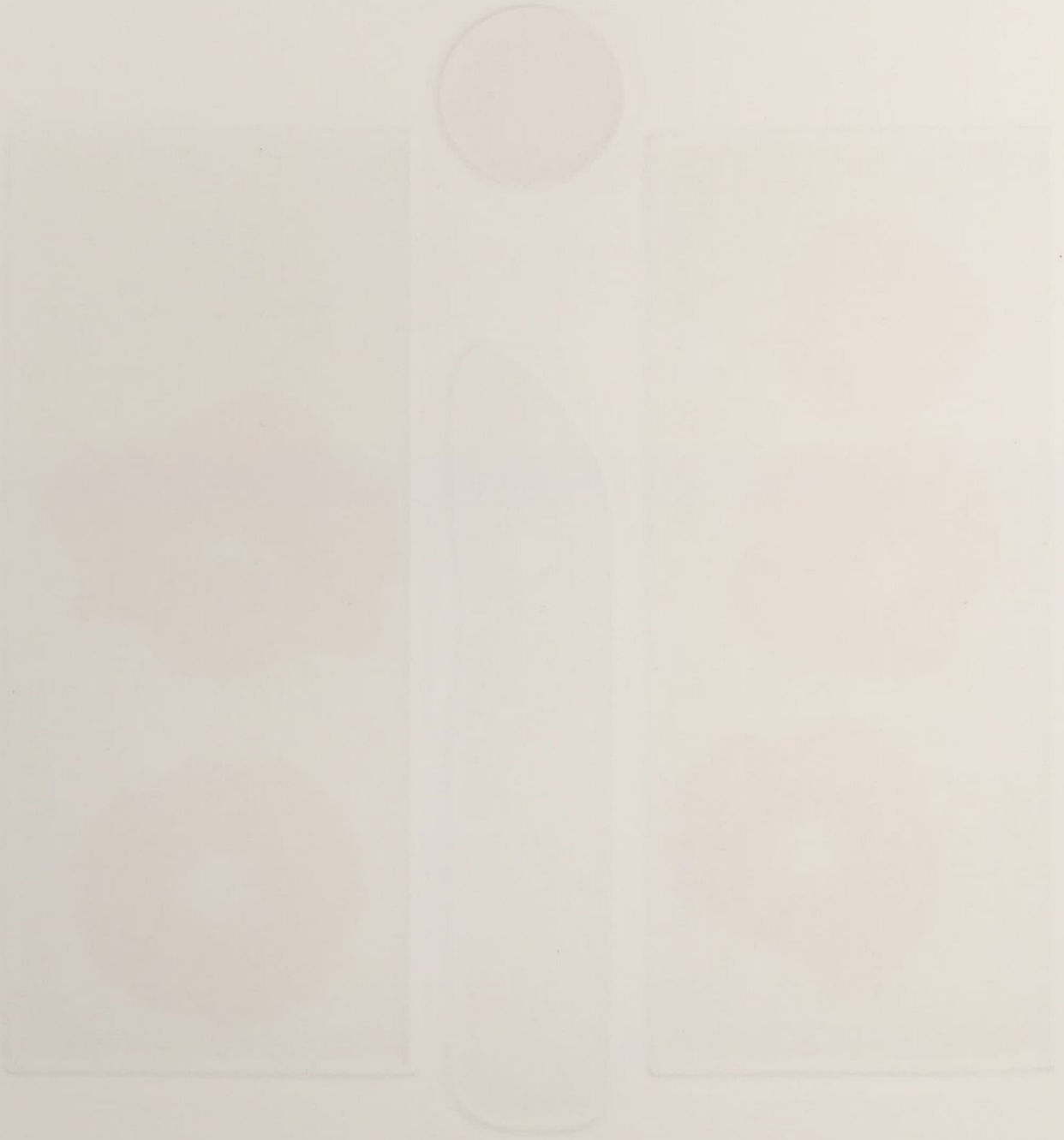
*But release me from my bands*
*With the help of your good hands.*
*Gentle breath of yours my sails*
*Must fill.*

Act V

Yasmin was young, violent, defined as
Schizophrenic by an institution
Intent on establishing its diagnosis.
Or so it seemed to a student nurse, learning
She could question, but not change, the status quo.
My daughter, groping to understand her
In the brief time given, rebelliously
Sided with Yasmin in her loud despair.

Yasmin's safe haven was in her paintings —
Enchanted private isles where misery, rage, aggression
Ebbed away. She offered these to some she trusted.
(Doves sent forth from her troubled ark to test the waters?)
And gave one to my daughter with the command:
'Now you must paint one too, for me.'
It seemed like an invitation to bridge the divide
Between Yasmin's world and hers.
'What shall I paint you?' she asked eagerly.
(An olive leaf sent back from friendly lands.)

Yasmin's reply, a numinous rainbow:
'Paint me a thousand poppies and two moons.'



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Shirley Jones '91